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FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6485  
INFO RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN PRIORITY 0504  
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 0296  
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 7280  
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU PRIORITY 5389  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 3921  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 1210  
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO PRIORITY 3990  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 3076  
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI PRIORITY 7872  
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI PRIORITY 5526  
RUEHON/AMCONSUL TORONTO PRIORITY 0326  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 2218  
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY  
RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORPORATION PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 COLOMBO 001020

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DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/INS  
MCC FOR D NASSIRY AND E BURKE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/17/2017

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PHUM](#) [MOPS](#) [CE](#)

SUBJECT: MAIN OPPOSITION AND RULING PARTY SPLINTER GROUP  
SIGN COOPERATION AGREEMENT

REF: COLOMBO 883

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires James R. Moore, for reasons 1.4(b,d).

11. (C) Summary. On July 19, the leading opposition United National Party and the recently-formed Sri Lanka Freedom Party/Mahajana (SLFP/M) wing (ref) signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU). The agreement stipulates that the two groups will jointly contest future elections. It outlines their key policies and how they intend to share power should they win. Key elements include constitutional reforms, a limit on the size of the cabinet, a solution to the ethnic conflict, and a long-term national economic plan. Embassy contacts tell us that additional members of parliament are interested in joining the new UNP-SLFP/M alliance. In fact, unless the formation can attract more partners, its chances of unseating the Government are slim. Nonetheless, the President and his administration are sure to keep a close eye on this new opposition force. End summary.

12. (C) On July 19, the leading opposition United National Party and the recently formed Sri Lanka Freedom Party/Mahajana (SLFP/M) wing (ref) signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU). The groups have agreed to link up to contest any future elections, outlining their key policies and how they intend to share power if they win. Opposition Leader and UNP head Ranil Wickremesinghe and SLFP/M leader Mangala Samaraweera spoke after the signing and invited other like-minded parties and individuals to join their alliance. Samaraweera said he was confident that the new coalition would come to power before February of next year.

13. (C) Key elements of the UNP-SLFP/M MOU include:

- Constitutional reforms through a Constitutional Council within 3 months of taking power.
- A presidency, elected by popular vote with limited executive power, that is responsible to the parliament and

the judiciary. Strengthening of powers of the Prime Minister and the Cabinet, with two vice-presidents to be elected from the Cabinet of Ministers.

- A maximum of 32 Cabinet Ministers.
- Laws to bar Members of Parliament from changing political parties after being elected.
- Immediate steps to investigate abductions and disappearances.
- Stronger laws to curb corruption.
- A solution to the ethnic conflict within 9 months that includes power sharing among all ethnic groups. (No further details provided.) A major military offensive to eradicate terrorism would ensue if any party (presumably including the LTTE) refuses to accept a political solution endorsed by the public.
- A long-term national economic plan.
- An improvement in relations with India, the EU, the U.S., and others.
- An end to media harassment and constitutional safeguards against a Criminal Defamation Law.
- Better treatment of and access for NGOs.
- Electoral cooperation in the form of a "National Congress"

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front. A National Congress government would have Wickremesinghe as Prime Minister and Samaraweera as Deputy Prime Minister. UNP and SLFP/M would share cabinet posts.

14. (C) Since the SLFP/M was formed in late June (reftel), it has been unable to attract additional supporters. However, various Embassy contacts tell us that additional members of parliament, particularly those loyal to former President Chandrika Kumaratunga, are interested in joining the new UNP-SLFP/M combination. Names often mentioned include the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress leader (and Minister of Posts and Telecommunication) Rauff Hakeem and Minister of Youth Pavithra Wanniarachchi.

15. (C) COMMENT: The MOU is an optimistic list of what a National Congress government would attempt to accomplish and how it would share power. It does not lay out plans for how to be a more constructive and proactive force within the current political context. If the alliance does not succeed in attracting more partners, its chances of unseating the Government are slim indeed. Nonetheless, the President and his administration are sure to keep a close eye on this new opposition force. The new combination is as-yet untested in an election. Although the SLFP/M currently only has two MPs, Samaraweera appears to retain significant support in his home district of Matara, Galle, and other areas of the South - where the current government also derives its strength, and where the UNP is relatively weak. Rajapaksa has long been wary of the intentions of former Chandrika supporters within the SLFP (reftel) and will worry about Samaraweera's potential to pull some of them away.

MOORE